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Serial 1050

EYES ONLY

Germany and Berlin

March 26, 1962  
Time: 10:30 a.m.  
Place: Soviet Mission,  
Geneva

U.S.

Mr. Kohler  
Mr. Bohlen  
Ambassador Thompson  
Mr. Akalovsky

U.S.S.R.

Mr. Semenov  
Mr. Kovalev  
Mr. Zolotov

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Mr. Semenov opened by saying it had been agreed to meet today because Mr. Kohler wished to raise some additional points in a preliminary way before the two Foreign Ministers met.

Mr. Kohler said we had reviewed the records of the last two meetings of this group and it seemed that we had gone over the papers of the two sides in great detail. Not much was to be added with regard to the Soviet paper. We continued to feel there was considerable difference between the Soviet paper on principles and ours. Our paper provided for something our Foreign Ministers could reach agreement on here in Geneva. He was not sure that this difference was recognized. Our paper did not push our proposals, which the Soviet Union had said it could not accept, but provided points both sides could agree upon and a basis for further discussion.

Mr. Kohler then expressed the hope that Mr. Semenov and he could discuss the underlying and fundamental problems so that our Foreign Ministers could deal with them rather than with points of detail. He observed that unless there was rapprochement of views with regard to the alternatives the Secretary had mentioned it was hard even to see where we would go from here. Mr. Kohler added that the Secretary hoped that at his meeting with Gromyko he could see where we stood so that he could go back and report to the President and, if developments required, to consult with the allies, something both sides might find of value.

Mr. Bohlen said he wished to make a few comments with regard to the nature

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of the U.S. paper. He said that after the first few conversations here it had become apparent to us that the differences between the two sides were great and that there was little likelihood of reaching agreement on substance here in Geneva. For this reason, we believed that in the given situation it was useful to draw up a paper including points relating to a few general principles on which there appeared to be no disagreement and providing a forum for further discussions. The U.S. paper, while leaving out the U.S. positions on substance, had enough substance to serve as a basis for further discussions. It was here that the basic differences between the U.S. paper and the two Soviet papers lay. The Soviet papers set forth the Soviet substantive position, whereas our paper set forth the common ground for negotiations at a future date.

(H/H)  
(4/5)  
Mr. Semenov observed that the U.S. side had advertised its draft principles from many angles and he, of course, understood that the U.S. liked its paper. The Soviet side had expressed its views on the U.S. paper during the meetings he had had with Mr. Kohler and his associates. Of course, the fundamental difference remained, and this had been noted in the meeting yesterday. The Soviet side had tried to obtain clarification of the U.S. position on specific issues so as to understand its internal logic. He said he did not wish to predict what Mr. Gromyko would do when he returned to Moscow, but surely he would wish to report to his Government and take appropriate steps in the light of what had been said here and of the trends which had been discerned in these conversations.

Mr. Semenov stated it was not that the USSR merely liked its paper on principles but also that it believed that the principles set forth in that paper were in the interest of peace and European security. The question of how those principles should be formulated was a different matter, but the questions of a peace settlement, of the conclusion of a peace treaty and of normalizing the West Berlin situation on the basis of such a treaty were demanded by life itself and they were not a matter of wording.

As to fundamental questions, Mr. Semenov said they had been discussed in this group and he believed both sides had a rather clear picture of each other's positions. He said he was not quite clear as to what Mr. Kohler had in mind as to what this group should deal with now.

Mr. Kohler responded that he believed it would be useful to clarify what the two Foreign Ministers would be talking about, because he was not sure whether the fundamental question had been clarified; namely, whether we were going to deal with facts, and not merely Soviet facts but all facts. The U.S. was prepared to live in peaceful coexistence with the existing situation, although we did not like that situation. However, we did not believe that Soviet officials were prepared to do the same. The U.S. accepted Soviet pressure in East Germany and had said that it was prepared to live with it and not to change the situation by force.

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On the other hand, the USSR did not appear to be prepared to live with the situation involving our presence in West Berlin. Mr. Kohler observed that he did not know what Mr. Semenov's reference to appropriate steps meant, but he hoped it did not mean unilateral measures against our interests. Thus, the fundamental question was whether we would have peaceful coexistence or conflict. If each side insisted on having its own way, conflict would arise; conversely, if neither side pushed its desires and lived with the situation, that would mean peaceful coexistence. The problem was as simple as that.

Mr. Semenov referred to Mr. Kohler's statement that the U.S. had developed its principles for peaceful coexistence on the basis of facts. However, there had been no peace treaty for 17 years, two independent German states had emerged, and an abnormal situation prevailed in West Berlin; all these were facts too. Both sides must now find a solution not on the basis of the past but of the situation as it existed now. After all, we were not negotiating in the smoldering ruins of Berlin as had been the case at the time of Potsdam. It was on this basis that the question of peaceful coexistence should be resolved. The Soviet Union was not proposing anything contrary to the interests of insuring lasting peace or contrary to facts.

On the other hand, Paragraph 2 in the U.S. paper referred to a unified Germany. The U.S. was either referring to the past and its recollections or was engaging in forecasts, since a united Germany might be possible only in the future. In other words, the U.S. was not proceeding from facts. Unfortunately, what the U.S. was saying did not accord with what it was actually doing. Both sides should recognize all facts and not just some of them. It was a curious fact in international relations that the occupation regime was being preserved in West Berlin while it had been abolished throughout the rest of Germany. As to Mr. Kohler's remarks about conflict, Mr. Semenov said he wished to let Mr. Kohler fight his genii alone. However, one should keep in mind that once the genii was let out of the bottle, it might be difficult to put him back into it. He did not wish to participate in such a fight and it was not his problem. Mr. Semenov said that if no agreement was reached, the Soviet Union would take the steps it had been talking about. A peace treaty could not mean war; we were sensible people and only someone who had lost his senses could wage a war over a peace treaty. What we should strive for was a peaceful settlement.

Mr. Kohler observed that at least some fundamental questions were being now discussed. Referring to Paragraph 2 of the U.S. paper, he said we believed that the basic principle of unification of Germany was something to which both sides could subscribe. Statements to that effect had been made by the USSR, the U.S., West Germany, and East Germany. The differences between the sides related to the question of when and how unification should be brought about. Mr. Kohler pointed out that the very wording of this paragraph indicated that we had made

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a significant concession to the Soviet Union in omitting reference to free elections, something Messrs. Bulganin and Khrushchev had subscribed to as recently as in 1955. Since the USSR appeared to have changed its mind, we were not forcing this issue on it, and this indicated a marked concession and a step toward meeting the Soviet point of view.

With regard to sub-paragraph 2(b), Mr. Kohler recalled Mr. Semenov's comments on it yesterday and said that it was our belief that we should see whether the Germans, by meeting on a technical and not political basis, could deal with these problems. After all, Mr. Semenov himself had said that unification of Germany was something for the Germans themselves to resolve. Therefore, this paragraph was a very good example of how we had taken into account the situation and the positions of both sides.

As to occupation status, Mr. Kohler said it was true that occupation was active in West Berlin. In fact, it was the presence of occupation authorities that had prevented West Berlin from becoming a Land of the Federal Republic. It was also true that in recognizing our obligations to our allies we had reserved our occupation powers in West Berlin and, as respects all-German questions, even in West Germany. The Soviets had made similar reservations in their arrangements with East Germany. We did not intend to violate our commitments to the USSR. The question was whether the Soviet Union wished to renounce its commitments.

With regard to the question of peace treaty, Mr. Kohler recalled his earlier statements that the question was not that of the paper itself, but rather of what actions would follow. Referring to Mr. Semenov's remarks that only someone who had lost his senses could wage a war over a peace treaty, Mr. Kohler said he thought only someone who had lost his senses would use a peace treaty as a cover for aggression against the interests of others. He reiterated that the problem was not that of the peace treaty itself but rather what a peace treaty would do, and pointed out that this had been stated at the highest levels.

Mr. Semenov observed that at his meeting with Mr. Kohler on Saturday he had expressed the Soviet views on the U.S. paragraph 2 in great detail and had stated the Soviet position and the basis for it. He reiterated that reunification of Germany was a matter for the two Germanies to resolve and it was they who must reach agreement on this problem. The fact was that there were two German states, one capitalist and one socialist, and that they were developing in ever more diverging directions, although the GDR had made a number of proposals aimed at reunification on the basis of the Potsdam agreements. These proposals were also aimed at peaceful settlement. However, the other Germany did not wish to listen to those proposals, perhaps because it had a different method of reunification in mind. In any event, this was something for the Germans to decide. A peace treaty would facilitate reunification and our job was to see that it be signed.

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(b)(1) (b)(7) Referring to Mr. Kohler's statements about vital interests, Mr. Semenov asserted a peace treaty was not directed against such interests and would not undermine them. Its only purpose was to draw a line under World War II and to do away with the vestiges of that war. Soviet vital interests, as well as United States vital interests, required that a new war be prevented.

Mr. Kohler interjected that this was correct and this was what the two sides were talking about.

(b)(1) (b)(7) Mr. Semenov agreed but said that the two sides had a different understanding of the situation. He went on to say that the Soviet Union believed that the present developments led with logical inevitability to an increase in the danger of a new war breaking out. A war we did not want must be prevented before it was too late. Therefore, a peace treaty should be signed.

(b)(1) (b)(7) He went on to say that the U.S. raised a different question, which was of a peripheral and limited nature, i.e., the question of the presence of Western forces in West Berlin, whereas the USSR had raised the general and fundamental problem. Both sides had an obligation to sign a peace treaty, but somehow the United States did not like to remember this obligation. Of course, that obligation should be fulfilled on the basis of existing facts.

Referring to Mr. Kohler's remark that the Western powers had prevented West Berlin from becoming a Land of the GDR, Mr. Semenov asserted that this was true only on paper and that both sides knew that the West had done everything to turn West Berlin into such in fact. He paraphrased a remark he attributed to Edward Bernstein, claiming that the United States was in effect saying: "Dear Willy (Brandt), one does it, but one doesn't talk about it, and much less put it on paper."

Mr. Semenov continued that the Soviet Union agreed with what the U.S. had said in theory, namely, that peaceful coexistence should be established, that ceases could be reconciled with the sovereignty of the GDR, and that there were three independent entities in Germany, as well as with some other points mentioned before. He could associate himself with all this, but what must be done now was to put all this into practice.

He asserted that paragraph 2 of the U.S. draft appeared to be designed for a different purpose, namely, to catch headlines in the papers. Yet propaganda was not our business here; our business was to look for the bringing of the interests of our two sides closer together and for the strengthening of peace.

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Mr. Kohler

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Mr. Kohler said he was surprised at this reaction to paragraph 2, inasmuch as it went a long way toward the Soviet position as this had been stated both privately and publically. However, since the reaction was negative, he supposed that it was in fact negative. He denied paragraph 2 was propaganda and said he was glad Mr. Semenov had raised the subject of propaganda. Our task for our Foreign Ministers was to sort out facts from slogans, and Mr. Semenov had mentioned slogans even today. For instance, Mr. Semenov had mentioned the drawing of a line under World War II. However, if this meant our getting out of West Berlin and submitting access to West Berlin to East Germany, those words acquired an entirely different meaning. The question was what the Soviet Union meant. The words did not mean anything in themselves. After all, Mr. Kohler said, he could draw a line under World War II simply by using his pencil.

Mr. Kohler said he wished to make a few observations of the final paragraphs of the U.S. paper. While Mr. Semenov had already made some comments on those paragraphs, he wished to be in a position to report to the Secretary. With regard to nuclear diffusion, Mr. Kohler said this formulation had been completely agreed in New York. Both he and Mr. Bohlen had been present at the meeting in New York and recalled that Mr. Gromyko had asked for a careful repetition of the translation of the formula. The present language reflected the same position. With reference to non-aggression, Mr. Kohler said he believed that in view of the fact that we were not prepared to recognize the GDR, legal formalization in the sense of accession to this commitment by other parties would have to be worked out later. However, we were prepared to meet the Soviet view as far as substance was concerned. As to frontiers and demarcation lines, we were prepared to declare that we would not use force to change them. Thus, in this respect, we were also meeting the Soviet wishes. Mr. Kohler then invited Mr. Semenov to make further comments on these paragraphs and express his thoughts on what should be discussed between the Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Semenov thanked Mr. Kohler for clarifications on these points and said he had stated his views yesterday and, therefore, there was no need for repeating them.

(b)(1) As to the question of drawing a line under World War II, the United States seemed to believe it was a slogan, but for the USSR it was not a slogan. For the USSR, it was reality in the light of the developments taking place in their own neighborhood. He suggested that perhaps the two sides looked at the situation from different angles and that this might account for their different approaches to and assessments of the situation, as well as for their differences with regard to the methods and substance of resolving the problem they both recognized.

(a)(1) Referring to Mr. Kohler's misimpression of surprise at his reaction, Mr. Semenov said his remarks should be taken in the framework of the general context. These were free conversations and each side should understand the remarks made by the other in the framework of the general content. He observed that surprise was the beginning of knowledge; however, one must not remain too long in that state of understanding the world.

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In conclusion, Mr. Semenov thanked Mr. Kohler and his associates for these exchanges of views and the pleasant and businesslike atmosphere in which they had been conducted. He expressed the view that these talks might be helpful to the furthering of the relations between our two countries. He said he was not sure whether the two sides had perfectly understood each other, but both of them had seemed to try to do so.

Mr. Kohler reciprocated Mr. Semenov's remarks about the businesslike atmosphere and expressed the view that these talks had clarified the positions to some extent.

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